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## RASHID AL-DIN'S DESCRIPTION OF THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

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### ラシード・ウッディーンの仏陀に関する記述について

ラジャブザーデ、ハーシェム

イール・ハーン朝下のイラン（13世紀中葉からの約1世紀）には、注目に値する特徴がいくつかある。そのひとつは、様々な宗教や哲学の紹介・布教活動に対する寛容性である。

ラシード・ウッディーン（1249頃-1318）の『集史』も、まさにこのような時代の落とし子である。この著名な歴史書には、カシミールの仏教僧の言を借りて、仏陀の生涯と教えについて記述した部分がある。記述は簡潔なものとはいえ、ムスリムの手になる書物では初めて、仏陀についての比較的正確な情報が盛り込まれている点が、非常に重要である。中でも興味深いのは、釈尊の世界観、また入滅に際しての奇跡、彼以後に現れる預言者などについて、他には見られない記述があることである。

約40年前、チェコの東洋学者カール・ヤーンが初めてこの『集史』の記述について言及したが、本稿ではこれについてより詳細に紹介する。（藤元優子 訳）

### INTRODUCTION

The appearance of Buddha is believed to have been in the middle of the 5th century B.C. His teachings flourished in India and spread to China through the Central Asia. A legend has it that "Bod", or Buddha, was the minister of Tahmûres, the Mythological king of Iran, who innovated a lot of things and established many institutions (Jouzjânî, pp. 134-5). Historical documents report of the existence of Buddhist monasteries and monuments in greater Iran right before the Arab conquest. "By the 5th /11th century," as Melikian indicates, "however, Buddhism, had so thoroughly disappeared from eastern Iran and Afghanistan that Bîrûnî,

usually a reliable reporter on religious minorities, was able to pass on only most confused and fragmentary information found in his work." He states further that "in the late 7th/13th century an imported version of Buddhism flourished briefly under the Mongol Il-khanids who were tolerating different faiths and exempted religious classes including Buddhist lamas from the poll tax".

The first Il-khan, Hûlagû (654~63/1256~65) was accompanied by Tibetan lamas -or bakhshîs, as they were known- when he arrived in Iran. His son and successor, Abâqâ (663~80/1265~82), welcomed bakhshîs at his court, and their position does not seem to have suffered even with the succession of his brother, the Muslim Ahmad Takûdâr (681~83/1282~84). In the reign of Abâqâ's son, Argûn Khan (683~90/1284~91), Buddhist influence increased, and Il-khan himself relied on the advice of the bakhshîs. Argûn's son Gâzân (694~703/1295~1304) who was reared as a Buddhist, converted to Islam on his accession as Il-khan in 694/1295 and, as recorded by Rashid al-Din in *Tarikh-e Gâzânî*, began to suppress Buddhism in Iran. A Buddhist way of thinking, however, continued to influence him exemplified by such deeds and words as not to catch or harm birds and feed them instead (Rashid al-Din, *Jâme'*, p.1383), and commenting on man's birth as being the most difficult thing in this world (*ibid*, p.1334).

#### JÂME' AL-TAWÂRIKH AND THE LIFE OF BUDDHA

The Universal History or *Jâme' al-Tawârikh* by 7~8/13~14 century historian Rashîd al-Dîn Fazl al-Lâh (d.718/1318) was arranged in four sections. The first, a history of the Mongols, was the original work commissioned by Gazan Khan. The second was a history of Il-khan Ûljâitû (703~16/1304~16) as well as the ancient kings of Iran down to the fall of Sassanian dynasty in the 7th century and a history of all other people of the known world, including the Chinese, Turks, Indians, Jews, and Franks (Europeans). The Prophet Mohammad and the Caliphate formed the subject of the third, while the fourth was devoted to the geography of the known world or "the seven continents or regions" (*aqâlim-e haftgâna*).

A history of India complete with a description of Buddha and his teachings in twenty chapters (21 chapters in the translated Arabic text dated 714/1314) is part of the second

section of Rashîd al -Din' s Universal History. Two manuscripts of these book preserved each in Topkapi Serayi, Istanbul, and the British Museum, dated H.717 and H.833 respectively, and on which this study is based, was published in mimeograph by Karl Jahn in 1965 together with the Arabic translation known as the Royal Asiatic Society's manuscript. It is highly regretable that a great part of the section dealing with the biography and teachings of Shakyamuni (chapters I to 18) is missing in the Topkapi Serayi manuscript, seemingly the most authentic and elaborate text available.

It is a well known fact that most of the earlier part of Rashîd al-Dîn's description of India is taken verbatim from the famous account of Persian historian Bîrûnî. In his classic survey of the geography of India, while in writing on the life and teachings of Buddha Rashid al-Din heavily relied on Kamalsheri, a Kashmirian Lâma or Bakhshi, as he is called in the text, who had been summoned to Tabrîz to assist in producing Persian translation of text relating to the subject (Jahn, p.186; Gray, p.30; Melikian). Kamalshiri may also have possessed illustrated sources which would have been available to scriptorium and used to decorate the book as seen in the Royal Asiatic Society's manuscript of the section (Gray, p.33). Karl Jahn admires the works of Bîrûnî and Rashîd al-Dîn "whose most outstanding characteristics may be considered to be their adherence to their sources and their aim towards strict objectivity" (p. 186).

The work hardly consists more than a simplified introduction to the life and thoughts of Buddha, a somehow Kashmirian interpretation of the tradition. Rashîd al-Dîn - Kamalsheri's life of Buddha, however, is the first attempt in Islamic world to give a relatively extensive and precise description of life and doctrine of the founder of this great religion. This was evidently made possible by the policy of religious tolerance exercised by Il-Khans in line with Mongol tradition.

#### APPEARANCE OF BUDDHA

In the first part of their introduction to the life and doctrine of Buddha, Rashîd al-Dîn-Kamalsheri name the six founders of religions of numerous Indian prophets of whom Shivâ,

Vishnû, and Brahma were forerunners of Shakyamuni Buddha. Shiva, according to his believers, was never born and will never die, and is said to have three eyes -sun, moon, and fire- and whose followers devote themselves to dancing. Vishnû teaches his disciples to practise an ascetic way of life and starve themselves with the aim to attain salvation, while the devotees of Brahma worship fire. Shiva, Vishnû and Brahma are considered to be gods by their believers whome Shakyamuni has cursed as satans.

The followers of Shakyamuni comprise of three groups, the lowest of which believe that they can only afford to try their best for their own salvation. those in the middle group think of the salvation of others too, while the devotees in the third and highest group, who are nearest to Buddha, endeavour to help everyone and aim the salvation of all mankind.

On the birth of Shakyamuni (chapter 2), Rashîd al-Dîn-Kamalsheri relate the famous Buddhist tradition. A son of Shuddhodana, the king of Shakya clansmen inhabiting in central India, and his queen Mahama (Maya), he was born when his mother, resting under a tree in a garden, reached out her right hand to pluck a branch. When he was born, he walked seven steps, after each pace there bloomed a rose garden and a treasure house appeared, whereupon he looked the four directions and said: "This is my last coming to this world. I have attained enlightenment and shall not be born again, and'll eternally return to my own world." Then the four angels, namely Shiva, Vishnû, Brahma, and Andra, who claim to be gods, came and washed him with rain water and took him and his mother in a palanquin to the palace where astrologers made his father, the king, anxious by predicting that his son will become the king of the four corners of the world or a deity worshipped by people of all classes.

## AGES OF THE WORLD

One of the most interesting subjects referred to in Rashîd al-Dîn's introduction to Buddhism is the concept of the ages of the world which is not necessarily or exclusively a Buddhist idea but a conception in Indian philosophy. As Karl Jahn puts it, "The Rashîd al-Dîn's Buddhist India is based upon the work of the Lâmâ Kamalshîrî, who naturally represented the Buddhist view and tried to find points of agreement with Buddhist ideas. Herein he differs distinctly from al-Bîrûnî who reflected the Hindu way of thinking and to whom we

owe a detailed description of the four ages of the world, In particular as regards their duration and nature, which Rashîd al-Dîn includes in his work" (Jahn, p.188). Rashîd al-Dîn explains that this world repeats itself in four ages, gradually deteriorating and decreasing in quality. The human life of 120 years in the first age is shortened to 5 years in the fourth when many wars are fought among nations and people do not have compassion on each other. According to his calculation we are now in the seventh millenium of the fourth age that lasts for 432,000 years.

### HIS WAY OF PRACTICE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Upon his coming to age, Sakyamuni, expressed his alienation to worldly affairs when he saw a sick and friendless man, met an old man bent with age, and encountered a group of mourners carrying a dead man. He said: "this world is full of suffering." Then, when he met a hermit in an outing, he came to like his way of life (chap.4). The young man's comment on the experience angered his father who ordered him to be confined in a castle guarded by four hundred valiant men.

The four kings ruling over territories stretched from the four sides of the fabulous mountain "Qâf", on hearing of his confinement came to his rescue. They flew him over the walls of the castle and run towards the Ganges. Here he encountered a number of pretenders in the appearance of hermits, boasting about their laborious study of the Way. They renounced him as disqualified as an ascetic, whereupon he sat on a rock for six years contenting himself with a grain a day for food and spurring on with the thought that "no ascetic in the past, none in the present, and none in the future, ever has practiced or ever will practice more earnestly than I do." Then an angel ascended from Heaven bringing the message that time has come for him to end this practice, whereupon he was called Shakyamuni. (chap.5)

### DISTINCTIVE MARKS OF A PERFECT MAN

Rashîd al-Dîn relates that Shakyamuni was perfect in typical appearance and physical qualities common in all prophets. These comprise of thirty two marks making the perfect feature and fine figure of a man (chap.3). Among these marks he mentions soft limbs, broad

chest and shoulders, white and neat teeth, cobalt-blue eyes and long eyelashes, a broad forehead like a gold plate, long arms, a strong and penetrating voice, a swarthy and fine complexion, and an attractive appearance.

#### SHAKYAMUNI'S CAUTIONS AND ADVICES

Shakyamuni seizes every opportunity to show people the right way, of which practice some examples are given in chapters 6, 8, and 16. The Buddha reminds people of the four principal sufferings called "the four noble truths", and teaches them how to relieve themselves from these hardships: "The world is full of sufferings. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness and death are sufferings. A man full of hatred is suffering, and to be separated from a beloved one is suffering. In fact, life that is not free from desire and passion is always involved with distress.... The cause of human sufferings is undoubtedly found in the thirst of the physical body and in the illusions of their source." (Teachings, p.38)

As Rashîd al-Dîn explains: "To Shakyamuni, evils are ten, caused by one's deeds, words, or heart. The first three evils are to kill, to steal, and to and to excite a sedition. The verbal evils are four: to lie, to speak ill of somebody absent, to say harsh words, and to talk idle. The last three evils resting in one's heart and mind are jealousy, grudge and hatred, and the lack of foresight" (chap. 6). Some typical advices of Shakyamuni are also related in the form of a dialogue between him and an angel (chap.16).

Shakyamuni once met a Brahman who had become extremely weak and pale because of practising asceticism. Shakyamuni told him that he was wrong in thinking that one can go to paradise simply by starving himself, and advised him to practise as follows: "Get up early in the morning, clean your body and then seat in a prayer position and make your vows that you will never steal other people's belongings or tell a lie, have a passion for the lawful or unlawful, engage in dancing, speak of playing or love affairs, listen to musical instruments played, smell or wear perfumes, wear colorful or fine clothes, ride on palanquins, horses or other animals, and take food more than once a day -since animals are slaughtered to make food...." Shakyamuni added that a longer fasting observed in such mental and physical conditions, a higher and more lasting paradise one can enter." (chap.8)

## SUCCESSION OF BIRTH AND DEATH

Incarnation and its stages are the subject of many chapters of Rashîd al-Dîn's introduction to Buddhism. He explains the process in a comprehensive setting comprising of six different phases of infernal, devilish, animal, human, medial, and angelic or celestial nature respectively (chap. 10). The lowest position, the hell, has eight stages. He also refers to the three world of higher (spiritual), middle (material), and lower (devilish or hellish) natures. The lowest position of the six phases, the hell, has eight stages, each allocated to perpetrators of certain wicked or malicious acts. Beside these, he mentions at least seven other hells where sinful people are punished and made to suffer in proportion to their wickedness.

There are acts by doing which men will be reborn as devils or demons (dīv) (chap.12). This is generally the fate of those who lack generosity, kindness, compassion, or other qualities considered to be humane. Among those people who will be reborn as a fetid animal (chap.13) are interestingly husbands who are extremely fond of, or excessively sentimental about, their wives. It is added that men live short because they have harmed or killed animals in their previous lives (chap.14). All people who are ill-mannered, ignorant or wicked will be reborn as a devil or an animal, except those blessed with a degree of knowledge and insight who will come to this world again as humans where their fate, status, welfare, and the degree of prosperity are determined according to their deeds in their previous lives. Among the factors ensuring one's well-being in the next life as a human, generosity and abstemiousness are especially important. To be reborn five hundred times as a woman is the fate of a man who is ogle and impudent, while a pious and chaste woman will be a man in her future life.

Paradise is the place for those who elevate their status from a human to that of an angel (chap.15). The author gives examples of those who qualify for this promotion reserved for pious, forbearing, charitable, and learned men as well as for those blessed with self respect and good manner.

In Chapter 18 Shakyamuni sums-up his teachings by warning against harming others and



killing even insects and beasts "who are suffering for their evil-doings in their previous lives or taking revenge for the hardships underwent or wounds sustained then."

Rashîd al-Dîn refers to the Buddhist tradition according to which Shakyamuni was born in this world eighty thousand times and in different shapes and characters (chap.9), and after his last appearance as a Buddha he returns to his own world ("nîrvânâ") and lives there eternally. The author narrates the story of a young disciple who was a crocodile in his previous life suffering for the wrong-doings in his human life before. The crocodile once gave up attacking a boat upon hearing the name of God from the frightened travellers on board crying for help, and as a reward for this thoughtfulness it was reborn as a human. Shakyamuni led the young disciple to the bones of the crocodile, by seeing which he remembered his past and beseeched Shakyamuni to relieve him from the circle of death and life, and his request was granted.

#### COMPROMISES FOR CONVENIENCE

The creation of a work of such a unique character within Islam can only be explained in connection with the enormous impetus being given at that time to Buddhism in the Mongolian Empire. However, as Karl Jahn points out, since the life and doctrine of Buddha was written in Islamic Iran and for Moslem readers, and "these revelations did not form part of the book religions originally tolerated by Islam... the author might have had to bear this circumstance in mind with a view to the content."(Jahn, p. 194)

The problem should have been more serious for Rashîd al-Dîn given his debatable background, high position, and sensitive status in the atmosphere dominating the Il-Khan court. His many rivals and opponents in the court and outside were restoring to all and every possible means to bring his downfall and even his physical elimination, as they finally manage to do. Heresy, alienation from Islam, and promotion of polytheism and idolatry could have provided them solid grounds to dispute his fitness for the position of the Great Minister. Besides, a group of Moslem clergy was highly suspicious that Rashîd al-Dîn, reportedly raised in a Jewish family, still cherished allegiance to the faith. It is highly probable that one main

reason behind his active engagement in writing treaties on Islamic theology and interpretations to the holly Koran despite the immense work of official duties loaded on his shoulders, was to defuse this suspicion and to disarm his antagonists.

When compiling this sensitive part of his Universal History, Rashîd al-Dîn should have had these considerations in mind, and, in an attempt to display some points of agreement and compromise between the two doctrines and to make the alien faith agreeable to the Moslem readers, he incorporated in it some statements in parallel with the Islamic teachings. Among the common points between the two faiths he has referred to, the followings are notable:

1) All prophets teach the same principles: Chapter one of the book, on divine teachings and Indian religions, concludes by this statement: "Uncountable prophets are to appear, of whom one thousand are referred to [in sources]. Shakyamuni was the last one of the seven prophets already appeared, and was named so because as a prince he abandoned the world. According to Kamâlsheri, it is quoted from Shakyamuni that all prophets are the same, emerging once and again to revitalize their religions. They all teach the same principles."

2 ) Revelations: Hevean sends messengers to Shakyamuni to bring him revelations. After completing his six years of ascetic practice, an angel descended to inform him that it was the time for him to end the practice. (chap. 5)

3) Monotheist Shakyamuni: Frequent references are made to the monotheistic mind of Shakyamini. Chapter 16, for example, refers to his sitting in private and praying to the almighty. Also, Rashîd al-Dîn quotes from Kamalsheri (chap.1): "Does not the cursed Shiva presumptuously call himself the creator of the universe, and does not Vishnu say that he kills the evils and guards the virtues? ...And that is why Shakyamuni has called these gods devils, because of their arrogance, their self-exaltation and egotism.'t (tr. by Jahn, p.193)

4) Shakyamuni, a book prophet: The introduction (chap.1) places Shakyamuni among the book prophets: "His book, 'the first and last of all books' as it is called there, is simply said to be Abidharma (Andram) which is the Buddhist theory of metaphysics. in Kamalsheri's

word this comprises the revelations of Shakyamuni," (Jahn, p. 195)

5) The next prophet and the Buddhist Utopia: It is related that Shakyamuni answering a question raised by one of his closest disciples predicts the coming of the next prophet whereupon everything becomes perfect, all people live a prosperous long life, nature will be green and abundant with flowers and fruits, and there will be no suffering (chap.17). The image of the Buddhist Utopia is somewhat similar to the concept the Shiite Moslems have of the just world and perfect life created by the reappearance of their 12th Imâm.

6) Attributions of the almighty: The verses chanted in praise of the worshipped as given in the introduction are similar to those expressed in Moslem tradition when praying the Almighty: "God the great, who has come from nowhere and will go to nowhere, and who perfected the creation and is omniscient and full of awareness.... He knows the minds of his creatures, resembles to nothing.... the Lord of all, and the mentor of both devoted and faithless men, the protector and supporter of angels." (cha p. 9)

As a precaution, the conservative Rashîd al-Dîn had also identified the most part of his introduction as topics related by Kamâlsheri Bakhshi and believed only by Indians.

## MIRACLES

A point of agreement between the Buddhist tradition and that of the book religions is seemingly the supernatural acts and miracles recounted about the founder of these religions. Such accounts are narrated in the Rashîd al-Dîn's introduction too. One incident is the scene that Shakyamuni throws his rice-bowl into a river, saying as he does so that if it floats upstream he is destined to be a mentor of the people (chap.6). Another miraculous incident is the defeat of an immense army of demons mobilized by Satan to fight Shakyamuni (chap.6). The death of Shakyamuni is also miraculous. Upon his entering a dome of translucent crystal instantly appeared in Kushingara, the gates of the building are sealed and he ascends in the form of a cylinder of light while addressing a grieved disciple and trying to comfort him (chap.20).

## A TREATISE ON INCARNATION

Finally, out of considerations already mentioned, Rashîd al-Dîn concludes the last chapter of the introduction by stating that he has simply tried to report what the people of India and Kashmer think about the [principles of this] religion which he calls "superstitions", and its founder. He explains: "Since the people of India believe in incarnation, and this belief is an obsolete one, especially compared to the excellent fait of Islam, I am going to conclude this book by adding a treatise I had written sometime ago to refute the false belief and included it in "Tauzîhât-e Rashîdî", one of my books, so that the readers of the present book also acknowledge the infirmity of this belief." The extended treatise, comprising the last part of the Topkapi Serayi manuscript but missing in the British Museum text, is a typical example of the author's dissertations generally abundant with references to, and quotations from the holly Koran and traditions.

## RASHÎD AL-DÎN'S APPROACH TO BUDDHISM IN 'TÂRÎKH-E GHÂZÂNÎ'

Rashîd al-Dîn's reference to the subject in the first section of his Universal History, 'Târîkh-e Ghâzânî', is quite different, evidently influenced by the circumstance of the time when Il-khan Ghâzân had just converted to Islam and Buddhist monasteries were being destroyed and Buddhist monks restricted in their activities. In relating the history of mongol and Turkish tribes, he refers to the faith as the religion of idolatry and heathenism (Rashîd, Jâme', pp.1,60~65). He praises Il-khan Ghâzân for having been converted to Islam, and for abandoning idolatry and giving instructions to destroy Buddhist temples which he calls 'idol temples' (ibid, pp.1253~55& 1356~57). These statements exemplify the formal historiography, while his book on the life and teachings of Buddha is the result of a relatively impartial and scientific study.

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